

BOSTON TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)
FOR A
THIRD GENERATION BIKE SHARING PROGRAM
IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

AUGUST, 2008



Request for Information (RFI)

Third Generation Bike Sharing Program

City of Boston

The City of Boston is seeking Information from qualified vendors and others with expertise in design, construction and operation of “third generation” bicycle sharing programs that incorporate information technology with shared bicycles as a way of providing an alternative transportation mode for Boston’s residents and visitors. The purpose of this request is to gather information on the state of shared bicycle program technologies and the industry in general as the City of Boston prepares to engage in a formal procurement process.

This is not a solicitation for products or services

Information that any interested party wishes to submit will be done so voluntarily and with the understanding that this RFI is for information gathering purposes only; this is not a formal solicitation. A formal solicitation may be issued as a result of, and subsequent to this RFI. Any cost information submitted will be used solely for the purposes of performing a market analysis and establishing a budget for the program. Cost information submitted will not be considered as responsive to any solicitation subsequently issued by the City of Boston.

The City of Boston is seeking letters of interest and ideas from private firms interested in establishing and operating a bike share program in the City, modeled after the innovative “third generation” programs in Washington DC and in European cities, featuring self-serve rental stations or remote unlocking mechanisms. The City is exploring launching such a program in 2010 in the greater downtown area as a first phase, with subsequent expansion to other areas in the City.

Responses to this RFI are due no later than 4:00 pm on Wednesday, November 5th, 2008. Please note that the City of Boston reserves the right to extend the deadline for RFI responses for an additional sixty days.

Responses to this RFI shall not exceed 10 (8 ½ x 11”) pages of text and 10 pages of photos, illustrations, and/or graphics. In responding to this RFI, the City of Boston would like potential vendors to provide information on the following:

1. **How a successful program might be structured;**
 - a. Technical specifications of the program – nature of the bikes, bike stations, and other technologies being used
 - b. Structure of the operating organization
 - i. Number and nature of required jobs
 - ii. Physical location requirements
 - c. Structure of interactions with the City of Boston
 - i. Functions performed by the City of Boston in the vendor’s proposal
 - ii. What the vendor needs the City of Boston to provide in order to make the program successful;
2. **An overall business model**, including projections of costs (broken down by capital cost, operating cost, and cost per bike) and sources of revenue;
3. **Background information on the vendor and its officers**
 - a. Organizational structure of vendors’ organization;
 - b. History of work with city governments;
 - c. History of work in bicycling and transportation.
4. **Timetable /schedule or chronology of events**, indicating time required for deployment.
5. **Evaluative discussion** of potential program weaknesses as well as strengths;

Additional background information can be found in the attached appendix.

Commissioner Thomas J. Tinlin
Boston Transportation Department
City of Boston

APPENDIX

➤ Background

The current rendition of bike sharing programs is a technology-based, experience-tested application of a fifty year old idea – free city bikes. The bike sharing concept has been spreading throughout Europe since the first technology-based programs in the late 1990s. There are now more than 30 European cities with a “third generation” bike sharing program in place. It is currently being considered by cities throughout North America as well, including San Francisco, Chicago, Portland, Oregon, Vancouver, and Montreal. Washington D.C. will have the first bike sharing program in the US when it opens a small pilot in July 2008.

Washington’s pilot program will have 120 bikes and 10 rental stations. The European bike share programs are all much larger than this. The Paris Vélib’ bike share program, which is the largest one in the world, has 20,000 bikes available at 1,451 rental stations. Most Parisians now have a Vélib’ bike within 200 meters of wherever they are (and at all major transit points and activity nodes).

Bike sharing allows individuals to have the benefits of bicycle use, when needed, without having to purchase a bike, store it, or bring it into town. The bicycle purchase and maintenance costs are borne by the service. To access the bicycles, users can swipe a credit card deposit to ensure they will return the bikes and users are then charged an hourly rate. Typically, there is no fee when bikes are used for a half hour or less. The plentiful distribution of rental stations within a target area makes the bikes readily available and a practical alternative to making short trips by car. Bikes rented from one location can be returned to any other location.

The deployment in Paris has been a major success. In Paris, each bike is being used by 12-15 people per day. There are 190,000 subscribers, who each pay a modest annual fee (around \$40) to use the service. There have been 20 million Vélib’ rentals from July 2007 to May 2008. The total amount of miles ridden in Paris has exceeded 10 million miles. The “mode share” of bicycling in Paris has increased by 168% in a matter of months – from about 1.6% to 4.4%. In surveys conducted in April 2008, 94 percent of customers are satisfied with the service, 97 percent would recommend it to a friend, and 96 percent say it gives a positive image of Paris.

➤ Program Objectives

The primary objectives of the Boston bike share program are to:

- Launch a successful bike sharing program on or before May 2010 that is financially sound, has the ability to expand in subsequent years, and is capable of meeting negotiated performance standards;
- Create an additional green public transit mode that is used by 15-50,000 people a day.
- Create 50 green jobs and promote green business in Boston.
- Increase the mode share of cycling in the city – target an increase in mode share from .5% to 2%-5%.

- Facilitate transit for commuters, tourists, and other visitors (supplement existing mass transit)
- Ensure that the service is capable of operating independently without long-term public investment;
- Provide a service that results in high rates of membership satisfaction.

The size of the project, the fee structure, and many of the details are open to negotiation. Boston estimates a need for 450 bicycles during phase I, 1,000 during phase II and over 1,500 in Phase III. We are looking for input from vendors to determine optimum quantities. Each vendor's proposal should provide an estimate of the size of deployment (measured in number of bikes and rental stations) by phase of deployment.

➤ **Expected Markets**

Although a formal market demand study has not been conducted, we believe the following users would be the primary markets for bike sharing:

- Tourists (9.2 million business and leisure visitors in 2006)
- Students (over 110,000 in Boston)
- Commuters (over 350,000 come into Boston every workday)
- Residents making trips for shopping, business, and other personal errands
- Businesses using the bicycles for deliveries and other business-related trips.

We believe that many employers would find the bike share program an attractive option in encouraging their employees to reduce their automobile commuting.

➤ **Target Neighborhoods**

The general area targeted for the bike sharing service is depicted in Figure 1 on page 5. The area includes the Financial District, North Station, Government Center, the North End, South Station, Back Bay, the Boston Common and Public Garden, Kenmore Square, the Fenway and the Longwood Medical Area.



Figure 1
Proposed Phase I Region

Within the phase I region, Boston estimates a need for approximately 45 bike share stations installed at public transportation hubs, large employment centers, commercial districts, major tourist attractions, high-density residential developments, parks, and large medical centers. We estimate that 30-35 of the stations in the first phase of the program would be installed in the Kenmore Square / Longwood / Fenway area. The remaining 10-15 stations would be installed in Downtown Boston, comprising the Financial District, South Station, North Station, the Boston Common and/or convention centers. The Kenmore/Longwood./Fenway area is attractive because of its high population density and demographics. The Downtown area is attractive because of tourism, and its strong marketing potential. We are looking for input from vendors to confirm or modify Boston's estimates regarding number, and location, of bike share stations.

The phase I region is a strong possible first location, for the following reasons:

- A large number of commuters
- A major focus for Boston tourists
- Ability of the bikes to complement mass transit in the area
- Flat terrain for biking

➤ **Vendor Tasks**

Table 1 lists potential roles for the vendor and for the City of Boston. This table represents a draft for discussion -- the City would like to have vendor feedback on this division of responsibility.

Note that the vendor would be responsible for all expenses related to this program, including, but not limited to:

- Installation of the bicycle rental stations and all related equipment;
- Daily operations, including moving bicycles from one station to another, if necessary;
- Routine maintenance, repair, and replacement of equipment;
- Overall program management and administration, including staffing, collection of fees, accounting and customer contact;
- Program marketing and promotion
- Establishment and maintenance of a web site.

The City will provide assistance in permitting and in determining bicycle rental station locations.

In addition, there may be opportunities for private funding of the program, in the form of donations by individuals and non-profit entities.

Table 1. Potential Roles

Contractor	City of Boston
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtain and manage bicycles.• Provide staff and management• Install parking infrastructure.• Conduct marketing and public relations• Set up and operate payment system.• Obtain permits or access to private land for stations.• Provide insurance.• Conduct credit card checks.• Maintain bicycles and bicycle rental stations.• Provide helmets.• Track performance data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assist in recruiting subscribers and funding partners.• Provide marketing support.• Promote use of the service to an engaged community of employers.• Provide permitting support.• Provide management oversight – analyze and evaluate project performance

The bicycles used in this program would need to be designed for durability, extensive use, and resistance to theft and vandalism. They would need to have seats that can be raised and lowered to fit different user heights, and be equipped with technology for tracking, as well as with basic amenities such as lights and fenders. Additionally, the vendor should consider how to incorporate bike helmets into the program.

The City of Boston has a strong preference for the vendor to assume all potential liabilities for the operation of this program, relating to potential rider injuries that occur while using the shared bikes. We would like vendors' estimates of the costs of insuring against this kind of liability.